



MELKSHAM URBAN DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

1937

*To the Chairman and Members of the
Melksham Urban District Council.*

SIR, MADAM AND GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to submit this my Eighteenth Annual Report on the state of the Public Health in Melksham Urban District. The Contents and arrangement are as far as possible according to Circular 1650 of the Ministry of Health, dated October 4th, 1937.

Statistics and Social Conditions of the Area

Area (in acres) 1042

Registrar-General's estimate resident population (1937), 4987

Number of inhabited houses (end of 1937), according to rate books, 1545

Rateable value, as at December 31st, 1937, £30,136. Sum represented by a penny rate, £117

The chief occupations of the inhabitants are India Rubber Manufacture, Milk Condensing, Trellis Making and Feather Purifying, and although I do not find that any of these Manufactures has any particular effect upon the workers, it is the common experience amongst the general practitioners of the district that there is a greater amount of general sickness amongst rubber workers than amongst other workers in the district

The unemployment was much less than formerly

Extracts from Vital Statistics

Live Births Legitimate, 33 Males and 28 Females ; Illegitimate, 0 Males and 2 Females ; Total 63. Birth rate 12.41 per 1000

Still Births. 0 males and 2 females 30.76 live and still births per 1000

Deaths 27 males and 25 females ; total 52 Death rate, 10.25 per 1000

Percentage of deaths occurring in public institutions, 26.92

Number of women dying in, or in consequence of childbirth, nil

Death rate of infants under 1 year of age, per 1000 live births, 0.0063. Legitimate, 0.0063. Illegitimate, nil

Death from Cancer (all ages), 7

Death from Measles (all ages), nil

Death from Whooping Cough (all ages), nil

Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age), nil

General Provision of the Health Services in the Area

Hospitals supported wholly or partly by the Wilts County Council :

(a) *Fever* There is an Isolation Hospital at Trowbridge, to which scarlet fever, diphtheria, encephalitis lethargica and typhoid may be sent for isolation and treatment

Small Pox These Cases may be isolated and treated by arrangement between the local Medical Officer and the County Medical Officer The Hospital is situated at Ogbourne St. George

(b) 1. *Tuberculosis*

- (a) Pulmonary—Winsley Sanatorium, nr. Bath, ; Harnwood Hospital, nr. Salisbury,
- (b) Non-pulmonary—Savernake Hospital, nr. Marlborough ; Bath Orthopædic Hospital

2. *Maternity* The only provision for maternity cases is the County Council Maternity Home at Corsham, but a few cases also make private arrangements for treatment at Devizes or Trowbridge

There is no institutional provision for unmarried mothers in the area, but there is a children's Home, controlled by the Guardians Committee of the Wilts County Council, at King Street, Melksham

Hospitals The majority of cases are treated at the Melksham Cottage Hospital and the Royal United Hospital, Bath. A new Hospital is nearing completion on a site in Spa Road, it is to contain 42 beds including 5 private wards. It is then intended to convert the existing Hospital into a Maternity Home for which it is well suited, and there will be an adequate number of beds for all present needs

Ambulance Facilities

- (a) Infectious cases, ambulance attached to the Isolation Hospital
- (b) The Melksham Hospital Ambulance for non infectious cases is kept at the Bear Garage, Telephone Melksham 15

Clinics There is a voluntary Child Welfare Centre at the Old Bank House, Melksham, held on alternate Thursdays

The Tuberculosis Dispensary is held on Wednesday mornings at the School Clinic, the Old Cottage Hospital, Trowbridge, when the County Tuberculosis Officer attends.

Orthopædic, also Throat and Ear Clinics are maintained by the W.C.C.

The treatment Centres for Venereal Diseases are the Royal United Hospital, Bath. Times of attendance : Men, Fridays and Saturdays, 5 to 6.30 p.m. ; Woman, Tuesdays, 5 to 6.30 p.m. Trowbridge Clinic : Men, Thursdays, 5 to 6.30 ; Women, 5 to 6.30

Public Health Officers of the Area

- One part time Medical Officer of Health (also Certifying Surgeon)
- One part time Sanitary Inspector, M.R. San. I.
- One part time Meat Inspector

Midwives and Professional Nursing in the Home Two fully trained District Nurses have now been appointed who undertake all midwifery in the home, and in addition, health visiting and all cases of non-infectious character. They are supported by the Melksham Nursing Association which is responsible by means of subscriptions and donations for their maintenance. There is no co-ordination with the Local Authority

Legislation in Force

- Public Health Acts (Amendment Act) 1890 Part iii
- Public Health Acts (Amendment Act) 1907 Part ii, Part iii, Part vi and Part x
- Public Health Act 1925 Part ii to iv inclusive (excepting Sections 21, 22 and 24)

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

1. (i) *Water* The supply has been adequate and the quantity pure.
- (ii) *Drainage and Sewerage* are satisfactory
2. *Rivers and Streams* The regulation of pollution is undertaken by the County Council
3. (i) *Closet Accomodation* I am not aware of any
- (ii) *Public Cleansing* There is a bi-weekly collection for the removal and disposal of house refuse
- (iii) *Sanitary Inspection of the Area*
 - (a) 30 Inspections. Slaughterhouses, 7
Bakehouses, 11
Factories, 12
 - (b) No statutory notice was served
- (iv). *Smoke Abatement* There was no nuisance from smoke noticed by or reported to me during 1937
- (v) *Swimming Baths and Pools* There is only one such area for which a portion of the open river is used
- (vi) *Eradication of bed bugs* No case of infestation has been brought to my notice during the past 18 years
4. The Sanitary condition and water supply of the schools in the area are satisfactory

HOUSING

STATEMENT OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1937,
UNDER THE ABOVE ACTS, IN THE MELKSHAM URBAN DISTRICT.

1. *Inspection of Dwelling-houses during the year—*

(1) (a) Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	21
(b) Number of inspections made for the purpose	...	...	...	29
(2) (a) Number of dwelling-houses included under sub head (1) above, which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925	...	...	...	Nil
(b) Number of inspections made for the purpose	...	...	...	Nil
(3) Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	...	...	...	8
(4) Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation...	...	...	...	5

2. *Remedy of defects during the year without Service of Formal Notices :—*

Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers	4
---	-----	-----	-----	---

3. *Action under Statutory Powers during the year :—*

A Proceedings under sections 9, 10 and 16 of the Housing Act, 1936 :

(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs.	...	...	...	...	Nil
(2) Number of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notices :—					
(a) By owners	...	...	...	...	Nil
(b) By Local Authority in default of Owners	...	...	...	...	Nil

B. Proceedings under the Public Health Acts. :

(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied	...	...	...	...	Nil
(2) Number of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices :—					
(a) By Owners	...	...	...	...	Nil
(b) By Local Authority in default of owners	...	...	...	...	Nil

C. Proceedings under sections 11 and 13 of the Housing Act, 1936 :

(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made	...	...	...	...	8
(2) Number of dwelling-houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders	...	...	...	...	8

D. Proceedings under section 12 of the Housing Act, 1936 :

(1) Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were made	...	...	...	...	Nil
(2) Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the tenement or room having been rendered fit	...	...	...	...	Nil

4. *HOUSING ACT, 1936, part iv.—Overcrowding.*

A. (i) Number of dwellings overcrowded at the end of the year	...	...	...	Nil
(ii) Number of families dwelling therein	...	...	...	Nil
(iii) Number of persons dwelling therein	...	...	...	Nil
B. Number of new cases of overcrowding reported during the year	...	...	...	Nil
C. (i) Number of cases of overcrowding relieved during the year	...	...	...	8
(ii) Number of persons concerned in such cases	...	...	...	70
D. Particulars of any cases in which dwelling-houses have again become overcrowded after the Local Authority have taken steps for the abatement of overcrowding				

Since the erection of four bedroomed houses, built to house the overcrowded families, no fresh cases of overcrowding have been brought to my notice.

E. Any other particulars with respect to overcrowding conditions upon which the Medical Officer of Health may consider it desirable to report.

I am not aware of any cases of overcrowding in the Council's area at the present time.

Inspection and Supervision of Food.

Milk Supply. The area lies in the middle of one of the most important dairy farming districts in the country, and the milk factories are all satisfactorily inspected and controlled from their respective headquarters. Furthermore, from time to time, accompanied by the Sanitary Inspector I have inspected the dairy farms in my area, and every endeavour has been made to ensure the supply and distribution of milk of pure and wholesome character.

Meat. (i) Systematic meat-inspection is carried out by the Meat Inspector, who receives notice of any intended slaughter and makes his inspection at the time.

(ii) The Public Health (Meat) Regulations, 1924, are in force and being carried out.

(iii) There is no public abattoir.

There were 4 registered slaughter houses in 1937.

Carcases Inspected and Condemned

	Cattle excluding Cows	Bovine	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs
Number killed	—	308	65	612	853
Number Inspected	—	308	65	612	853
All diseases except Tuberculosis					
Whole Carcases condemned	—	—	—	—	—
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	—	1	—	—	—
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than Tuberculosis	—	0.32%	—	—	—
Tuberculosis only ; Whole Carcases condemned	—	6	—	—	3
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	—	8	—	—	40
Percentage of the number inspected affected with Tuberculosis	—	0.54%	—	—	5.04%

Other Foods. There are 6 bakehouses in the area. All were systematically inspected and the existing powers have been found quite adequate for dealing with sanitary conditions in these places.

Food Poisoning. Nil.

Sale of Food and Drugs Act. This is administered by the Wilts County Council.

Prevalence of, and control over, Infectious and other Diseases

The cases of notifiable infectious disease during 1937 were sporadic and there was no epidemic.

With a view to establishing an effective control over Diphtheria explanatory literature of the principles of immunization was sent to all parents in the area together with forms for the acceptance of the Council's offer of free immunization for every child in the district.

I regret to announce that for children of five years of age and upwards the percentage of acceptances was only 23, and of children between the ages of 2 and 5, only 13 per cent. of parents accepted. This attitude of the parents of the district was partly fostered by letters from laymen to the local press and also due to the fact that we have not had a really serious epidemic of late years.

Notifiable Diseases during the year

Disease	Total cases notified	Cases admitted to Hospital	Deaths
Smallpox	Nil	Nil	Nil
Scarlet Fever	6	6	Nil
Diphtheria	4	4	Nil
Enteric Fever (including Paratyphoid)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Puerperal Fever (including Pyrexia)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Pneumonia	1	1	Nil
Erysipelas	2	2	Nil

Tuberculosis. My figures are too few to place them in tabular form. There were on my register on December 31st, 1936, two male pulmonary cases and one female. During 1937 three new cases were notified, two male and one female and in addition, two male cases were transferred from the Bradford and Melksham R.D. so that on December 31st, 1937, I had on my register six male pulmonary cases and two female. With regard to non-pulmonary cases there were on my register on December 31st, 1936, four male and three female. During the year three male and two female were added so that at the end of the year there were seven male non-pulmonary cases and five female.

No cases were removed from the register either by death or other reason.

Bacteriological Examinations. For Diphtheria, 58; for Vincent's Organism, 1; for Tubercle Bacillus, 1; Complement Fixation Reaction, 2.

I am, Madam and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

D. LEIGH SPENCE,

M.A., M.B., B.Ch., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.

Medical Officer of Health.